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INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE OF PUPILS.
ITS PRESENT STATUS IN GERMANY.

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In regard to the advantage and pedagogical value of international correspondence, Professor Hartmann, chairman of the central office in Germany, writes in April, 1899:

We have to do simply with the conducting of channels from the great stream of conversation that is going to waste in other countries, into our own country where the foreign language can be cultivated only artificially. Thus the learner is brought into contact with the life of the foreign language. In just this personal relation lies the incentive to learn, which must be evident to everyone who looks into the matter at all. This relation, however, is liable to be underrated by outsiders, because they themselves have not had that experience in their school days. They fail to place themselves in the position of the pupil for whom there is an especial charm, first, in thinking that the foreign language material has been shaped for him and directed to him; secondly, in the opportunity of making practical use of his gathered linguistic knowledge in corresponding with a person just like himself, but who is living in different surroundings. In the letters from a stranger the correspondent soon detects sympathetic chords. Again, this relation is in a high degree adapted to awaken a spirit and love for work in the school; the pupil has an opportunity to give utterance to his personality freely. On the other hand, the pupil's pride is aroused when he writes to his foreign comrade in his own mother-tongue; for it is arranged that he write alternately in his own and in the foreign tongue. When the German student writes in German, he feels proud to act as the teacher of his partner and to think that he has a great opportunity of helping him, thus aiding in spreading his mother-tongue in the distant country. Since this pertains alike to both parties, it follows that out of this incentive, through proper supervision on the part of the school, a great deal of good may come. It is evident that in the hands of incompetent students evils may arise, which, however, may easily be averted by a careful selection of the students for correspondence. Admittance, then, is an honor for which only the best in a class can hope. Those not admitted will be aroused to do their share in upholding the dignity of the school.

Again Professor Hartmann writes in *Pädagogisches Wochenblatt*, June 16, 1897:

By means of this simple arrangement an entirely new source of interest is added to the teaching of modern languages, which promises a great advance in the general knowledge of language. Just the more intimate knowledge of every-day speech enables the student to appreciate the literary

language better. The gain in the knowledge of country, people and national customs brought about by sociable correspondence is no less than the linguistic gain. And is it put too strongly when I say that this activity may become to the teacher a source of great information regarding foreign nations?

Professor Markscheffel, of the Realgymnasium of Weimar, formulates his observations thus far in his *Festrede*, 1903, as follows: (1) International correspondence aids the student in acquiring style and a knowledge of the grammar of the foreign language. (2) It gives practice in reading handwritings in foreign languages. (3) It affords a heap of useful knowledge about the country, people, manners, public opinion, school and family life, which are all different in different countries. (4) It removes prejudices and teaches a respect for other nations, thereby doing away with jingoism. (5) It gives an insight into the thought and soul of the foreign nation. (6) Not only are interesting topics discussed, but landscape cards, stamps, photos, coins, papers, books, etc., are exchanged. (7) It increases the respect and confidence, for the letters soon take on an air of intimacy. Thus advantages come where they were least expected. Professor Markscheffel tells of a Frenchman who came to the University of Leipzig for a semester in order to visit with his German correspondent. (8) It has in it an ideal benefit; mutual relations spring up which have a bearing on the political intercourse. The letters are like friendly handshakings. In place of newspaper attacks there will be mutual confidence, respect, and peaceful competition among nations. For this reason the congress of the friends of peace in Hamburg gave its full sympathy to the idea of foreign correspondence, and urged it especially in such countries as, *e. g.*, Austria and Switzerland, where several languages are spoken. Politics are barred, but if pupils mutually clear up political prejudices and warn each other against false statements made about their countries and people, this sort of politics is commendable.

Although Mr. Markscheffel takes perhaps too ideal a view of the situation, in that it will aid in banishing war, this much can be said, that international correspondence will help to fill the abyss that separates us from a country like Spain.

In regard to the disadvantages, difficulties, etc., in Germany, Professor Markscheffel says on p. 14 of his pamphlet:

Concerning the pedagogical value of international correspondence there can no longer be any doubt. Of course, this institution, like every other, has its faults and shortcomings. There has, therefore, been no lack of opponents to express their fears and anxieties concerning it. They say, *e. g.*: "Schools have no time for such things; teachers and students are sufficiently engaged, if not already overburdened." It is true, teachers of modern language have their full measure of work from the additional tasks of theme reading, correcting papers, etc., but the supervision of the correspondence of a few students is an easy task and offers interesting experiences to the active teacher, which he will scarcely shirk. As to the students—most have time enough for sports and pastimes ordinarily, so that a few hours can easily and willingly be set aside for this beneficial mental exercise. Experience has proved this. This is especially true since only those skilled in the foreign languages are to be admitted. To such the writing and reading of letters in foreign tongues will give no trouble.

The fact that a majority of the members of the Bavarian Neuphilologenverband voted against a resolution in favor of student correspondence, in Nuremberg, April, 1902, for fear of its overburdening the students, is not significant, for Bavaria is entirely without experience in the matter. In 1897, when the first experiments were made elsewhere, the Bavarian school commission prohibited the undertaking, at least for the boys' schools. In the countries where student correspondence has been tried practically, there no longer exists any anxiety on this score.

Strange to say, the greatest opposition comes from a fear that it will lead to unpleasant relations, to the practice of deceits on the part of students, which cannot be prohibited on account of the impossibility of sufficient supervision. This criticism was made most often during the early experimental stage of the undertaking. Today, when the correspondence is regulated by fixed rules; when only such pupils are admitted at the central office who deserve confidence as to their morals, and whose parents have given their consent; when, especially in girls' schools, only such letters are mailed that bear the stamp of the school, this criticism falls flat.

Dr. Hertel, in an article entitled "Herr Professor Dr. K. A.

Martin Hartmann und der internationale Schülerbriefwechsel," in *Pädagogische Studien*, Vol. XXII, No. 4, clings to his former view, that international student correspondence is an evil, because he had learned of instances where it led to cheating and to unpleasant relations. Professor Hartmann answers his charges in the same journal, Vol. XXIII, No. 1. Dr. Hertel had based his charges on the unfortunate experiences at Zwickau and applied them to the whole system generally. The trouble at Zwickau had arisen from leaving the whole matter in the hands of the students, when the thing had not yet been systematized.

Mr. Hengesbach, of Kiel, made similar attacks in the year 1898, early in the history of the undertaking. He spoke of the lack of system and supervision. As a result, he says, the teacher might become an object of criticism in the letters, and the pupils might prefer slang to literary expression. Mr. Konrad Meier, of Dresden, answered Hengesbach's criticisms in a clearly written article in *Neuphilologisches Centralblatt*, June, 1898, and shows quite conclusively that Hengesbach had been talking without knowing the facts, and making attacks because he refused to be interested.

Professor Markscheffel says another criticism is made, namely, that pupils will get outside help in their work, *e. g.*, from persons versed in the language that the students want to use. This is not a serious objection, for help of this sort can be obtained easily, and is obtained in the regular school branches. In most cases the teacher would be able to tell whether or not the writing was the student's own. Several years of experience show that even a loosely guarded correspondence is quite safe. When, on the other hand, the teacher notices the gradual improvement in the students, he has reason to rejoice. The statement that unscrupulous pupils speak unfavorably of their teachers need cause no alarm.

Occasionally parents have feared that their children might get partners below their social rank. In answer to this it may be said that, in the first place, an effort at equality of rank is made in the assignment, for the social standing of the parents is

considered in each case. Furthermore, what difference would it make, as long as the children were intellectually and morally equal? From the beginning the leaders of the movement have endeavored to remove any faults or shortcomings, and to assist wherever possible.

There are, however, real difficulties, such as the satisfactory pairing of correspondents. For example, a German boy of seventeen might want to correspond with a boy of the same age in California. Perhaps there is no California boy listed, or, if so, he may be twelve years of age, and therefore not a suitable candidate. Or a German girl might want to correspond with a French girl, and find she can get no partner because very few French girls choose to correspond in German; they prefer English. There has been another peculiar objection on the part of parents. English parents have been anxious for the welfare of their boys, and French parents for their girls.

A word concerning the treatment accorded to the correspondence plan in Germany. After the Congress of Secondary Education held in Paris in 1900, which, under the leadership of Professor Hartmann, gave great moral support to the movement, the subject was repeatedly discussed at educational meetings all over Europe. It was discussed at the meeting of the Association of the *Gymnasium* Teachers of Saxony at Plauen, April, 1901, and a month later at the meeting of the Association of the *Realgymnasium* Teachers of Saxony. Recently it was made the topic of a *Festrede* at the Realgymnasium of the Grand Duke at Weimar. From this address a considerable portion of the material for this paper was taken. On the whole, the movement is receiving cordial treatment at the hands of educators, and interest in it is spreading. What the future of the movement will be remains to be seen. If there is a sound idea at the bottom of it, it will thrive. According to the report from the German Central Station the total number of applications for correspondence from 1897 till the middle of 1902 was 10,600. The last three years show the following figures: 1,382, 2,187, 1,796. The last shows a decrease, but considering that almost the same number of schools applied as the year before (127 to 131), that of them,

67 per cent. had applied before, and that the rules have been made much stricter as to choice of students, there is really not much to fear.

In the year July 1, 1901, to July 1902, 1,783 addresses were distributed among Germans. Of these, 1,010 were French and 773 were English and American. Of the 127 German schools taking part, 34 were higher girls' schools, 26 *Realgymnasias*, 24 *Gymnasias*, 21 *Realschulen*, 14 *Oberrealschulen*, 3 teachers' seminaries, 12 trades' schools.

According to Professor Hartmann, the figures for the year 1902 were: German applications, 1,946—1,132 for French and 814 for English correspondents. There were distributed during the year, among Germans, 1,780 foreign addresses—950 French and 830 English. This is, indeed, a gain. Especially France and America have recently contributed well.

The number and kinds of schools in Germany that applied from 1897 to the middle of 1902, were as follows: 280 schools (196 boys' and 84 girls'), viz.: 90 *Gymnasias*, 56 *Realschulen*, 46 *Realgymnasias*, 14 *Oberrealschulen*, 5 teachers' seminaries, 5 trades' schools, 75 higher girls' schools, 9 seminaries for lady teachers.

In 1901 there were 145 schools, with 155 teachers, that applied at Leipzig. The division into states of these 145 schools is as follows: Prussia, 88; Saxony, 38; German Austria, 7; Mecklenburg, 3; Hamburg, 2; Bavaria, Württemberg, Sachsen-Weimar, Reuss, Waldeck, Bremen, Lübeck, each 1. This shows that there is a greater distribution in north and middle Germany, where there are 136 schools. There are only 9 schools for south Germany and Austria. Therefore the requests from the French for correspondents in south Germany have usually not been fulfilled, and it shows that requests for certain kinds of correspondents cannot always be complied with.

Adults take part in the correspondence—students, teachers, merchants, etc. During the year 231 adults applied at the central office—125 for French and 106 for English correspondents.